

## The Impact of Leadership Style, Thinking Style and Job Satisfaction on Iranian EFL Teacher Retention

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### Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship among leadership style, job satisfaction, and teachers' retention with their respective sub-scales. To this end, 356 (145 male and 221 female) Iranian EFL teachers participated in the study. Osborne & Reiman's (2005) The Teacher Perception of success and teacher retention questionnaire, Fiedler & Garcia's (1987) Leadership questionnaire, Sternberg's Thinking Style Questionnaire (1991) and Smith's Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (1969) were used to measure the variables. The results of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis confirmed the hypothesized model of relationships among the study variables. The final model of the network of associations among variables also revealed significant correlations among various sub-scales of the study. The findings of this study can be used by language teachers and researchers in the field.

**Key words:** language learning strategy, personality trait, mindfulness, network of associations

### 1. Introduction

Success in teaching in general and language teaching in particular is a function of a complex set of variables. Much has been written on teacher's variables and the role they play in the given process, however, a recent surge of interest is being observed in the current literature which emphasizes the role teachers play in the general process of educational success in the field. Numerous variables have been referred to that are assumed to facilitate the teaching process with regard to the role of teachers. Among such variables, one can refer to leadership style, thinking style, teacher's job satisfaction and teacher retention.

With all these studies however, the fuzzy relationships among these variables seem not to have been vividly displayed. Two main reasons can be mentioned for the problem. First, the focus of studies done on the above-mentioned variables mostly has been on individual variables, and second the research designs adopted have not followed the modern measurement theories and computing models ignoring the subtle interrelationships among the sub-scale items of such variables. Hence using a more accountable research design, effort has been made in this paper to compare the effects of these variables; job satisfaction, leadership style, thinking style on teacher retention among Iranian EFL teachers. The findings are expected to provide a basis upon which to remedy teacher retention development programs and decrease attrition and turnover.

#### 1.1. Job satisfaction

Generally speaking, job satisfaction is an effective response to one's situation at work. Thus it is a function of the discerned relationship between what one wants from teaching and what one perceives it is offering to a teacher (Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2004).

Extrinsic factors have also been associated with teacher satisfaction, containing salary, support from administrators, accessibility of resources, (Thompson et al., 1997). These and other aspects of teachers' working environment have been identified as factors that contribute to increased teacher dissatisfaction and to teachers leaving the profession. This is considerable because it has been found that when teachers are not satisfied with their working conditions, they are more likely to leave the profession (Travers & Cooper, 1996; Tye & O'Brien, 2002).

### ***1.2 Job Satisfaction & Teacher Retention***

Teacher job satisfaction as a general measure has been found to be a significant predictor of effective teacher retention (Hall, Pearson, & Carroll, 1992; Ostroff, 1992; Zigarreli, 1996). Those planning to leave teaching had lower levels of job satisfaction (Hall, et al., 1992; Ostroff, 1992). A New Jersey State Board of Education study in 1984 found similar results (Ellis, Klagholz, Schechter, & Newman, 1991; cited in Gold, 1996). Thus, it implies that while hiring individuals provides a teacher in the short term, it does not address the problem of retaining teachers in the long term. In addition to a higher probability of teacher attrition, teachers without proper personal and academic qualifications when entering teaching have lower satisfaction with their job than do traditionally prepared teachers (Lutz & Hutton, 1989).

### ***1.3 Job Satisfaction, Teacher Retention, and Leadership Style***

Teacher job satisfaction is also linked to teacher retention through such moderating variables as satisfaction with principal leadership and satisfaction in general (Zigarelli, 1996). Reyes and Shin (1995) found that teacher job satisfaction is a determinant of teacher commitment and that it "must be present before the individual develops organizational commitment" (p. 36). The relationship between job satisfaction and commitment is not necessarily characteristic of teachers only.

Korkmaz (2007) studied the effects of leadership style on the organizational health of schools in Turkey. He cited studies that relate the dissatisfaction of teachers to low salaries, lack of resources, inappropriate administrative leadership styles, and job related stress. In addition, he cites studies that attribute strong correlations between the principal's leadership style and teachers' job satisfaction (p. 25). Leaders with transformational styles have a positive influence on teacher job satisfaction because they encourage innovation that leads to climates more conducive to learning and positive relationship among administrators, teachers, and students.

### ***1.4 Thinking Styles***

Thinking styles are encompassed by intellectual styles which also embrace cognitive styles, learning styles and problem-solving styles (Zhang & Sternberg, 2006). Zhang and Sternberg (2006), perceive thinking styles a wider concept than learning and cognitive styles since they can be applied to both academic and non-academic settings. Like the earlier discussed variables thinking style as mentioned has been found to correlate with inherent and Personal characteristics of EFL teachers

### ***1.5 Job Satisfaction, Teacher Retention, Leadership Style and Thinking Style***

As it is revealed by the aforementioned literature, the impact of job satisfaction and teacher retention and also the effect of leadership style, the thinking style and teacher retention have been separately investigated from different perspectives. With all these however, the research methods used to date lack a unified theory behind. Most of the studies reported do not draw upon the more robust methodological designs and models which can give a more precise and inclusive pictures of the associations of the variables in the study. Furthermore, we still do not exactly know the exact interplay of these variables studied simultaneously. To this we should add the lack of a proposed path model which delineates the direction through which these variables interact. To account for some of these methodological concerns, effort has been made in this study to adopt a much more dynamic model which can investigate the simultaneous relationships of these variables giving a more precise pic-

ture of their associations. In the following sections, the methodology adopted and the results will be presented.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Participants and procedure

356 (145 male and 221 female) EFL teachers participated in the study. They were selected from some cities in Iran, namely, Ilam, Tehran and Mazandaran. Their mean age was 25 to 50 years. All the participants had at least 4 to 10 years of experience in teaching English. Participants completed the questionnaire within a month. The questionnaire distributed through email. Teachers received instructions on completing all questionnaires through a letter from the researcher.

### 2.2 Measures

To collect the data, the following instruments were utilized.

2.1.1 *Osborne & Reiman's (2005) The Teacher Perception of success and teacher retention questionnaire* which assesses teachers' perceptions of the effect of principal leadership on teacher retention. There are three sections to this questionnaire. The first section includes 35 statements that describe issues affecting teachers. These statements can be categorized into five domains: (a) time issues, (b) student discipline, (c) teacher professional growth and development, (d) school leadership, and (e) classroom materials, supplies, and resources. Teachers were asked to respond to: (a) the degree to which the statement is true for them in their school and (b) the degree of importance as to how each statement affects their decision to stay at or to leave their school. Responses were measured by a five point Likert scale (1 =never true to 5=always true and 1 =not important to 5= very important).

2.2.2 *Fiedler & Garcia's (1987) Leadership questionnaire* which is called LPC examines 18 scales and each scale has 2 choices. Because the LPC is a personality measure, the score you get on the LPC scale is believed to be quite stable over time and not easily changed. Low LPCs tend to remain low, moderate LPCs tend to remain moderate, and high LPCs tend to remain high. Research shows that the test-retest reliability of the LPC is very strong.

2.2.3 *Sternberg's Thinking Style Questionnaire (1991)* investigates the different strategies and ways people use to solve problems, to carry out tasks or projects, and to make decisions. There are four sections; functions including legislative, executive and judicial; forms including hierarchic, oligarchic, monarchic and anarchic; levels including global and local; scopes including internal and external.

2.2.4 *Smith's Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (1969)* is a valid measure of job satisfaction. This measure has been designed to measure satisfaction through 5 aspects of a job, the work itself, pay, promotion, supervision and co- workers.

### 2.3 Data analysis

In order to analyze the data assumed in our hypothesized model, the researchers used *Lizrel 8.7* to investigate the model by SEM (structural equation modeling) analyses. At first phase, an exploratory factor analysis was utilized to determine the number of factors of questionnaire. We conducted Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's Test to validate the relationship among observed and latent variables. After deleting some scales in exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis was used to evaluate construct validity (Pett et al., 2003; Royse et al., 2006) To investigate the appropriateness of the hypothetical models, goodness of fit indices were used. Therefore, Root Mean Square Error (RMSEA), the comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis index also known as the non-normed fit index (TLI) or (NNFI) (Bentler & Bonett, 1980), the normed fit index (NFI) and the relative fit index (RFI) assessed an appropriate fit.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is utilized to determine the factors in the questionnaire used in the study. After carrying out factor analysis several times, 4 main factors in questionnaire components have been remained. These factors contain 58.14 percent of score variance. The result from exploratory factor analysis has been shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Factor Loading of Scale Indices

Scales	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Contingent Reward	0/746			
Job Promotion	-	-	-	-
Supervision	0/800			
Colleagues	0/403			0/688
Nature of Work	0/520			
Class Management		0/869		
Instructional Resources		0/854		
Judicial			0/593	
Local			0/694	
Anarchic	-	-	-	-
Legislative			0/580	0/446
Executive	-	-	-	-
Monarchic			0/755	
External			0/692	
Oligarchic			0/688	
Hierarchic			0/760	
Global			0/675	
Internal			0/529	
Conservative			0/659	
Idealized Influence				0/684
Inspirational Motivation				0/671
Intellectual Stimulation				0/420
Individualized Influence			0/448	0/578
Unexpected Reward				0/610
Exceptional Management				0/812
Laissez-faire Leadership			0/526	0/542

In the exploratory analysis, such sub-scales as Colleagues, Judicial function, Individualized consideration, Laissez-faire leadership had common loading. Also, scales such as Job promotion, Executive function were lack of factor loading. Therefore, these scales had been deleted among the related variables under study. After the deletion process, The remaining factors resulted from these variables were found to account for 62.60 percent of the score variance.

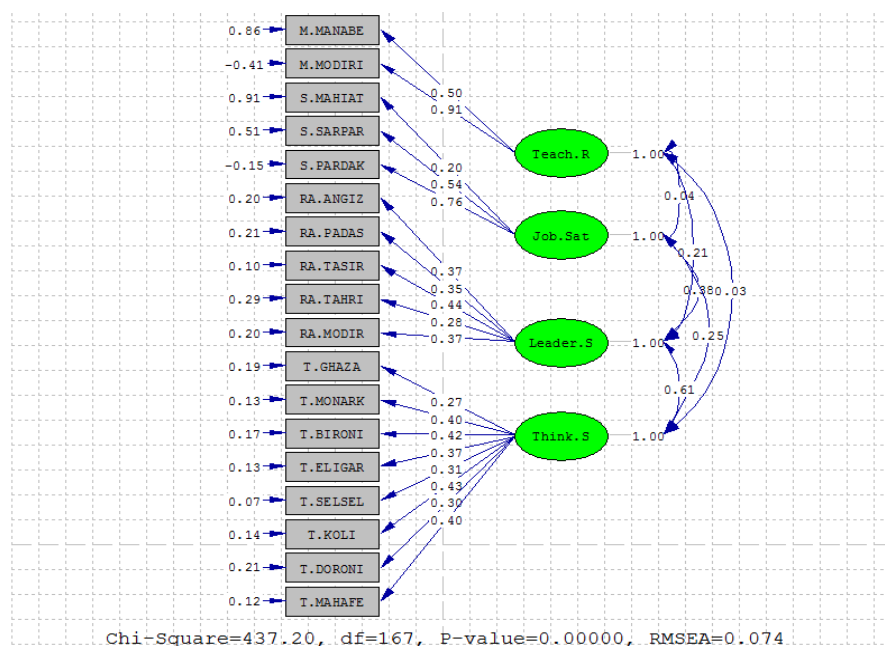
To confirm factor structures resulted from exploratory analysis, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was utilized. Confirmatory factor analysis is an approach based on structural equation modeling which analyzes the relationship between latent variables and measured variables (McCallum & Austin, 2000). CFA is an analysis used to evaluate construct validity of the path model proposed (Pett et al., 2003; Royse et al., 2006). To test the suggested model, maximum likelihood was used and to consider the appropriateness in this hypothetical model, goodness of fit indices were used. According to Sun (2005), these indices are used to evaluate the validity of variables. The Chi square statistic is the first measure of how well a model fits the data; however, sample size greatly influences it and thus is rarely non-significant in samples sufficiently large to legitimately perform CFA

(Thompson & Daniel, 1996). Therefore, Root Mean Square Error (RMSEA), the comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis index also known as the non-normed fit index (TLI) or (NNFI) (Bentler & Bonett, 1980), the normed fit index (NFI) and the relative fit index (RFI) were used in this study to assess the appropriate fit of the model proposed. Further, To evaluate their validity, indices such as Root mean square of approximation (RMSEA), Tucker- Lewis index (TLI), Non normal fit index (NNFI), Comparative fit index (CFI), and Standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) had been utilized. Results from confirmatory factor analysis are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Fit Indices of the First Model**

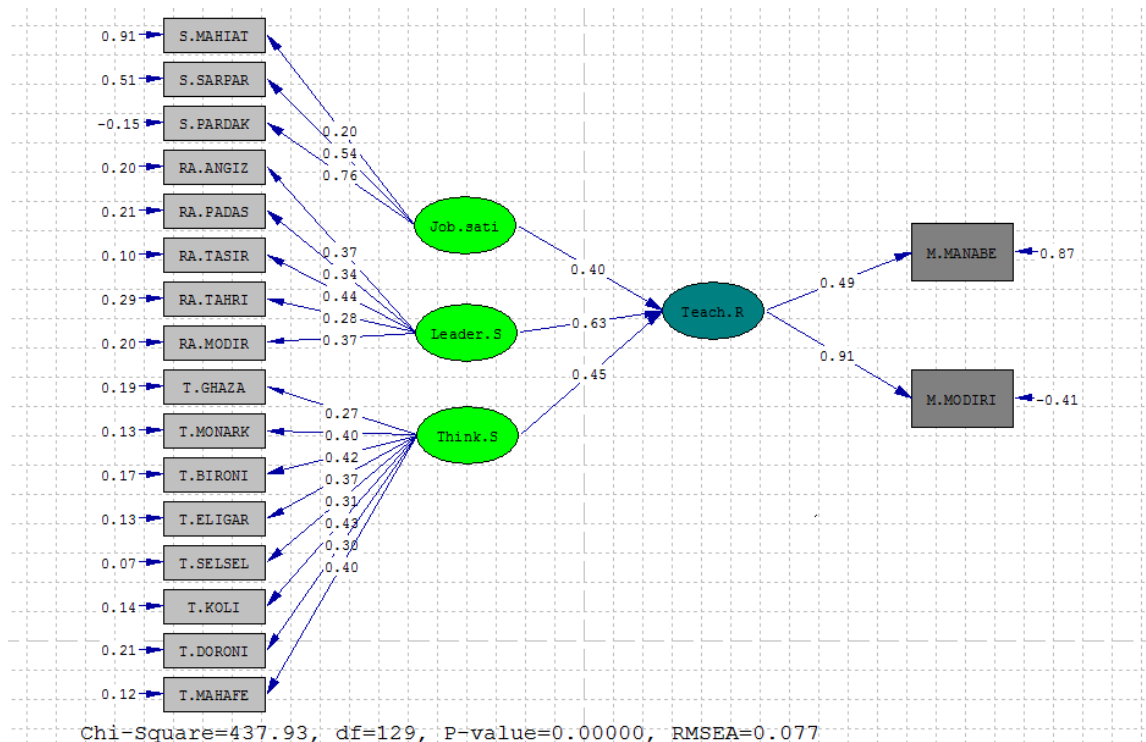
Fit Indices	Factor Structure	Value	Result
Normal chi-Square	$2=437.20\chi$	0.777	Accept
Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation	RMSEA	0.070	Accept
Root Mean Squared Residual	RMR	0.003	Accept
Goodness-of-Fit Index	GFI	0.909	Accept
Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index	AGFI	0.92	Accept
Normal Fit Index or Bentler-Bonett Index	NFI	0.92	Accept
Comparative Fit Index	CFI	0.94	Accept
Incremental Fit Index	IFI	0.94	Accept

With regard to Table 2, the ratio of Chi Square to degree of freedom is 437.20 which is not a good index for goodness of fit but the other indices investigated accept the model. RMSEA with less than 0.05 is appropriate, between 0.05 and 0.08 for medium model and above 0.1 for weak models (Brown & Cudeck, 1993). As shown in Table 2, RMSEA and SRMR have an appropriateness of goodness. NFI, NNFI, CFI, GFI, IFI, AGFI are between 0.9 to 0.95 which are closer to 1 and they too are good indices and meaningful. IFI, NNFI, CFI, RMSEA and SRMR were not influenced in external variables (Hu & Bentler, 1998). Therefore, factor analysis in the present study is quietly desirable which confirm appropriateness of goodness in the model proposed.



**Figure1. Measurement Model of 4 Dependent & Independent Variables in Standardized Estimates**

Figure 1 and 2 display the schematic representation of the accepted model as well as standardized path correlations among the main variables and sub-scales.. According to this diagram, job satisfaction, thinking style, leadership style and teacher retention had been two-tailed path. It is worth mentioning though that the continuous analysis of the model called for the modification of some factors. Accordingly, some parameters which were not meaningful in the early model were deleted and the final model has improved (figure 2).



**Figure 2. Measurement Model of Dependent Variable with 3 Independent Variables in Standardized Estimates**

Table 3 shows Fit Indices of the Second Model.

**Table 3. Fit Indices of the Second Model**

Fit Indices	Factor Structure	Value	Result
Normal chi-Square	2=437.93 $\chi^2$	0.777	Accept
Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation	RMSEA	0.0770/	Accept
Root Mean Squared Residual	RMR	0.065	Accept
Goodness-of-Fit Index	GFI	0.950/	Accept
Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index	AGFI	0.890/	Accept
Normal Fit Index or Bentler-Bonett Index	NFI	0.95	Accept
Comparative Fit Index	CFI	0.95	Accept
Incremental Fit Index	IFI	0.95	Accept



According to Table 3, RMSEA and SRMR indicate that the goodness of model is desirable. Also, IFI, CFI, NNFI, NFI have been reported above 0.9 which show the acceptable goodness of model. GFI and AGFI both were in the medium but generally, goodness of fit in the final model has been confirmed and this factor model is the best fit for the data.

According to diagram 2, 3 independent variables with dependent variable have been represented through one way path. It represents an acceptable relationship between them. In other words, job satisfaction, thinking style and leadership style had a direct effect on teacher retention.

To see further how factor load ,two multiple regression analyses were run. The results are shown in tables 4 and 5 below.

**Table 4. Multiple Regression between Dependent & Independent Variables**

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.749 <sup>a</sup>	.202	.181		.48528	2.366
a. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership Style, Job Satisfaction, Thinking Style						
b. Dependent Variable: Teacher Retention						

**Table 5. Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Teacher Retention**

Coefficients					
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t
		B	Std. Error	Beta	
1	(Constant)	1.331	.318		4.187
	Job Satisfaction	.288	.087	.625	3.329
	Thinking Style	.379	.175	.560	2.166
	Leadership style	-.228	.113	.414	2.017
a. Dependent Variable: Teacher Retention					

As shown in the above tables, multiple regression findings also confirmed the relationships obtained by SEM.

We then explored the significant among the main variables and sub-scales of our proposed model. Tables 6 and 7 show the correlation matrices of the main and subscale variables showing the subtle interplays more.

In determining correlations, vicariate coefficients or Pearson's  $r$  parametric test of correlation revealed that four of the variables correlated with each other. Table 6 displays the correlation matrices of each subscale with the other subscales in job satisfaction, leadership style, thinking style (Independent variables) and teacher retention (dependent variable) with each of subscales. The correlation between teacher retention and the remaining subscales in independent variables are as follow: Conservative (thinking style) ( $r = .644$ ,  $p < .007$ ); Nature of work (job satisfaction) ( $r = .526$ ,  $p < .000$ ); Judicial (thinking style) ( $r = .621$ ,  $p < .000$ ); Oligarchic (thinking style) ( $r = .042$ ,  $p < .03$ ); Contingent of Reward (job satisfaction) ( $r = .435$ ,  $p < .000$ ); Internal (thinking style) ( $r = .818$ ,  $p < .001$ ); External (thinking style) ( $r = .526$ ,  $p < .03$ ); Supervision (job satisfaction) ( $r = .359$ ,  $p < .000$ ); Global ( $r = .472$ ,  $p < .04$ ); Idealized influence ( $r = .565$ ,  $p < .004$ ); Hierarchic (thinking style) ( $r = .496$ ,  $p < .03$ ). The correlation matrices between the mentioned subscales and teacher retention were statistically significant.

**Table 6. Correlational Matrices among Latent & Observed Variables**

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Teacher Retention
1.conservative (T.S)	1									
2.Nature of work (J.S)	.135	1								
	.143									
3.Contingent Re-ward (L.S)	.283**	.046	1							
	.002	.621								
4.Judicial (T.S)	.277**	.300**	.026	1						
	.002	.001	.774							
5.Inspirational Motivation (L.S)	.370**	-.018	.225*	.010	1					
	.000	.847	.013	.918						
6.Laissez-faire Leadership (L.S)	.349**	.129	.265**	.030	.120	1				
	.000	.159	.003	.742	.191					
7.Oligarchic (T.S)	.432**	.204*	.130	.159	.280**	.259**	1			
	.000	.025	.158	.082	.002	.004				
8.Contingent Re-ward (J.S)	.443**	.181*	.098	.205*	.035	-.021	.313**	1		
	.000	.048	.286	.025	.706	.822	.001			
Teacher Retention	.644**	.526**	.019	.621**	-.056	.042	.708*	.435**	1	
	.007	.000	.837	.000	.546	.032	.022	.000		

\*\**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

\**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

**Table 7. Correlational Matrices among Latent & Observed Variables (Section 2)**

Correlations		9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Teacher Retention
9.Internal (T.S)	1									
10.External (T.S)	.318**	1								
	.000									
11.Intellectual Stimulation (L.S)	.072	.298**	1							
	.433	.001								
12.Supervision (J.S)	.333**	.471**	.228*	1						
	.000	.000	.012							
13.Monarchic (T.S)	.366**	.624**	.338**	.220*	1					
	.000	.000	.000	.016						
14.Global (T.S)	.424**	.529**	.506**	.468**	.582**	1				
	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000					
15.Idealized Influence (L.S)	.222*	.220*	.283**	.325**	.235**	.381**	1			
	.015	.016	.002	.000	.010	.000				
16.Hierarchic (T.S)	.405**	.591**	.177	.380**	.564**	.463**	.345**	1		
	.000	.000	.054	.000	.000	.000	.000			
Teacher Retention	.818	.526	.217*	.359**	-.060	.472	.565**	.496*	1	
	.001	.030	.117	.000	.516	.040	.004	.032		

## Discussion



This study sought to investigate the impact of leadership style, thinking style and job satisfaction on teacher retention. The findings revealed that there was a nearly high correlation between job satisfaction and teacher retention and also leadership style and teacher retention which conform some of the previous studies (Hall, Pearson, & Carroll, 1992; Ostroff, 1992; Zigarreli, 1996). A New Jersey State Board of Education study in 1984 found similar results (Ellis, Klagholz, Schechter, & Newman, 1991; cited in Gold, 1996). The findings further demonstrated the relationship among job satisfaction, teacher retention, and leadership style. (Betancourt-Smith, Inman, & Marlow, 1994; Zigarelli, 1996; Reyes and Shin, 1995).

The result of this study was, also consistent with Catalano's (2002) , Butler, Cantrell, and Flick (1999), Brock & Grady (2007), Futernick (2007), and Johnson (2006) who argue that effective school leaders will provide sufficient planning time for their teachers and will appropriately protect teachers' teaching time so that they can more effectively do their jobs. Teachers will feel more supported by their administrators and will be more likely to remain in education and possibly in their current schools.

Research overwhelmingly supports the idea that school leadership affects teacher retention (Brock & Grady, 2007; Ingram, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, 2004; Waters & Cameron, 2003). The findings of this study support the research cited. According to the results of this study, there was a statistically significant relationship between teachers leadership and teacher retention. According to Moller and Pankake (2006), "Leadership is all about relationships" (p. 88). If principals create opportunities to develop relationships with their teachers, perhaps teachers will perceive their own roles more importantly in their schools and result in higher teacher retention. In general, research supports that teacher professional growth and development is important for all teachers - both new and veteran (Brock & Grady, 2000; Futernick, 2007; Johnson & Birkeland, 2002).

### Conclusion

The correlation between leadership style, job satisfaction, and teachers' retention was determined in this study. The results were consistent with other researchers' findings. Job satisfaction has been linked to employee retention, quality, and productivity in organizations (Crossley et al., 2007; McNatt & Judge, 2008). The findings of this study indicate that transformational leaders have a positive relationship to job satisfaction, whereas laissez-faire leaders have a negative relationship to job satisfaction. With this information, principals or managers can develop strategies that can decrease teachers' job dissatisfaction and increase their job satisfaction. These changes could result in improved employee retention, productivity, and quality. The result may help improve EFL teachers Job Satisfaction and Retention.

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